United Nations E/CN.18/2011/9

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
25 October 2010

Original: English

United Nations Forum on Forests
Ninth session
New York, 24 January-4 February 2011
Item 9 of the provisional agenda*
Multi-stakeholder dialogue

Multi-stakeholder dialogue

Note by the Secretariat

Summary

The participation of major groups, as identified in Agenda 21, in sessions and intersessional meetings of the United Nations Forum on Forests has been recognized as a key component in ensuring stakeholder involvement in decision-making processes related to sustainable forest management. At its seventh session, the Forum adopted the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests and the multi-year programme of work for the Forum for the period 2007-2015, both of which call for the active and effective participation of major groups in the work of the Forum.

In 2011, the multi-stakeholder dialogue will be held during the first week of the session. Representatives of major groups will share their perspectives on progress made in the implementation of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests and towards the achievement of the four Global Objectives on Forests. They will also present the outcome of the Major Group-Led Initiative in Support of the United Nations Forum on Forests, held in July 2010 in Accra.

The present note gives an account of relevant developments that have occurred since the eighth session of the Forum and describes a number of measures that the Forum may wish to consider in order to continue to enhance the substantive contributions of major groups to its discussions.

* E/CN.18/2011/1.

10-60197 (E) 091110

Please recycle

I. Introduction

1. The present note has been prepared to facilitate the multi-stakeholder dialogue at the ninth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests. Three joint discussion papers, prepared by the focal points of major groups in consultation with their networks, are contained in addenda to the present note.

2. Since its inception, the Forum has recognized the contributions of major groups, as identified in Agenda 21, in the implementation of sustainable forest management and has made significant progress in enhancing stakeholder participation in its work. At its eighth session, the Forum adopted a resolution on enhanced cooperation and coordination.[1] The Forum encouraged Member States to explore ways in which to increase the participation of stakeholders and civil society, including indigenous and other local and forest-dependent communities and other holders of traditional forest-related knowledge, in future sessions of the Forum and requested its secretariat to provide support for such activities.

3. Between 2009 and 2010, representatives of major groups actively participated in three country- and organization-led initiatives in support of the Forum, held in Guilin, China (November 2009), Accra (July 2010) and Oaxaca, Mexico (August and September 2010), and in the first meeting of the Open-ended Intergovernmental Ad Hoc Expert Group on Forest Financing, held in Nairobi (September 2010).

4. Pursuant to United Nations Forum on Forests resolution 7/1, a multi-stakeholder dialogue is held as an agenda item of every Forum session. The Forum secretariat facilitates consultations with the focal points of each major group[2] in order to plan and prepare for the multi-stakeholder dialogue. The format and content of the dialogue are proposed by the focal points, in consultation with the Forum secretariat, to the Bureau of the Forum for its consideration.

5. The Forum secretariat works closely with major group focal points to enhance participation in accordance with the rules of procedure of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council.

II. Enhancing stakeholder participation in the future work of the Forum

6. The effective participation of major groups is critical to the success of the international arrangement on forests. Major groups have convened several organization-led initiatives in the past in order to make substantive contributions to discussions on such varied issues as traditional forest-related knowledge and gender and sustainable forest management. As part of the effort to enhance stakeholder participation in the work of the Forum, major groups convened a Major Group-Led Initiative in Support of the Forum, focused on the application of sustainable forest management to poverty reduction and the strengthening of the multi-stakeholder approach within the Forum. It was the first initiative in support of the Forum to have been launched by major groups, and it provided an opportunity for major group representatives from 30 countries to actively develop their contributions and policy

[1] See E/2009/42-E/CN.18/2009/20, chap. I.B.

[2] A complete list of the focal points of major groups is available at www.un.org/esa/forests/contacts-major_groups.html.

recommendations for the ninth session of the Forum. Nearly 70 representatives of major groups as well as Government and intergovernmental organizations participated in the Initiative, which was held from 26 to 30 July 2010 in Accra, and was hosted by the Government of Ghana, with financial support provided by the Governments of Norway, Finland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Austria and Canada, as well as by the International Tropical Timber Organization.

7. The Major Group-Led Initiative was designed to support the United Nations Forum on Forest process by enhancing the meaningful participation of major groups at the policymaking level. The main objectives of the Initiative included: developing concrete recommendations for the ninth session of the Forum; identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the multi-stakeholder dialogue process and formulating specific recommendations aimed at increasing the effectiveness of the dialogue; identifying specific activities through which major groups could make contributions to the International Year of Forests; and fostering alliances, partnerships and networking within major groups and between them and other key players in the international arrangement on forests.

8. The Major Group-Led Initiative recognized the efforts of Member States and other stakeholders to advance sustainable forest management through the Forum and to develop key recommendations linked to tenure rights, access and benefit-sharing, traditional forest-related knowledge, community-based forest enterprises, and leadership in the area of sustainable forest management among women, indigenous peoples and other marginalized groups.

9. During the Initiative, the major groups decided to coordinate their contributions to the ninth session of the Forum and to prepare three joint discussion papers, on the three sub-themes to be considered by the Forum at that session.

10. Representatives of major groups contributed significantly to the work of the first meeting of the Open-ended Intergovernmental Ad Hoc Expert Group on Forest Financing, held from 13 to 17 September 2010 in Nairobi. Their proposals and comments on various issues under consideration were submitted for discussion in an open and participatory manner, alongside those of the experts.

III. Multi-stakeholder dialogue at the ninth session of the Forum

11. Pursuant to its resolution 7/1, the Forum holds a multi-stakeholder dialogue at every session. The active involvement of major groups in the dialogue process is important in ensuring that discussions at the ninth session reflect a diverse range of views and concerns.

12. The multi-stakeholder dialogue will be held during the first week of the ninth session and will, inter alia, provide major group representatives with the opportunity to present the report of the Major Group-Led Initiative. During the dialogue, major group representatives will also present the priority areas and recommendations set out in their three discussion papers, concerning community-based forest management; social development and indigenous and local communities, including land tenure; and forests and culture. Major group representatives will continue to be invited to present their views and comments throughout the discussions.

IV. Conclusions

13. Member States and stakeholders may wish to consider approaches to a way forward in improving cooperation in areas where commonalities exist and in continuing to work as a matter of priority in areas where divergences of views exist. They may wish to focus on the following areas for consideration and action:

(a) Continuing stakeholder involvement in intersessional activities of the Forum in an open and participatory manner, and encouraging the consideration of major group perspectives in discussions at Forum sessions to strengthen international forest policy;

(b) Seeking further concrete steps to ensure meaningful participation on the part of all stakeholders, including indigenous peoples and women, who are the primary groups involved in the use of forests and impacted by forest management decisions (or the lack thereof), and whose full participation is critical to the improvement of sustainable forest management and to a sustained flow of benefits from forests;

(c) Seeking the active and meaningful participation of young people, who provide a unique perspective and can act as "agents of change" through sustainable development education, shifting social and cultural values towards greater sustainability;

(d) Working together to develop effective policy and legal and regulatory frameworks to support community forestry and community-based forest management, based on identified experiences and best practices in such management;

(e) Working together to support identified positive examples that form the framework for a set of guidelines for best practices in capacity development, with the active involvement of women, young people, civil society, small-forest owners, forest businesses and workers, and the scientific community in meaningful improvements in tenure rights and the development of effective associations/unions;

(f) Supporting efforts to develop effective legal systems for the protection of intellectual property rights and the traditional forest-related knowledge of local and indigenous communities which can inform and provide valuable scientific insight into the effects and impacts of and coping strategies for climate change;

(g) Continuing to support the mainstreaming of traditional forest-related knowledge into national forest plans and programmes, with the involvement of relevant stakeholders, including local and indigenous communities, non-governmental organizations and the scientific community.

14. Member States may wish to:

(a) Support the major group initiative on the roles of civil society actors and the means of their engagement with the Forum and the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests;

(b) Continue to examine ways in which to encourage the participation of those major groups that thus far have not been involved with the Forum's work;

(c) Encourage and support joint initiatives by major groups on thematic issues considered at Forum sessions, with a view to substantive contributions to the deliberations of the Forum;

(d) Continue to re-evaluate the modalities of the multi-stakeholder dialogue, and consider mainstreaming it into discussions at future sessions of the Forum, taking into account lessons learned by other forums and the outcome of the Major Group-Led Initiative.